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ABSTRACT

A sample of 1,183 new freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), who had attended a two-day freshman orientation were polled on their opinions and background characteristics. Half of the students were male, half female; the majority (86 percent) were white and had been raised in predominantly white suburbs. Two-thirds reported having at least a B average in high school, and over 50 percent planned to live on campus. Among other findings are the following: 28 percent of the students chose UMCP for academic reasons, 25 percent for its geographic location, and 16 percent for its relatively low cost; UMCP was the first or second choice of colleges for 82 percent of the sample; although 79 percent believed that UMCP has a good academic reputation, 41 percent also indicated that they considered it a "party" school; 60 percent of the students indicated that their most important current educational objective was learning skills directly applicable to their career goals. Cited reasons for college attendance included: (1) its importance as training for a career, (2) the extracurricular aspects of college, (3) desire for the pursuit of knowledge or cultivation of the intellect, and (4) recognition of the role of higher education in emphasizing individualistic interests. On social issues, the entering freshmen surveyed tended to be noncommital in that 52 percent were neutral about whether UMCP should actively recruit blacks, and 40 percent were neutral about whether the university should use its influence to improve social conditions in the state. (Author/LB)

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A PROFILE OF 1979 INCOMING FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK

R. Scott Rodgers, William E. Sedlacek and Lois M. Wright

Research Report # 17-79

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Summary

A representative sample of 1183 new freshmen entering the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) who had attended the two-day freshman orientation sessions (50% male and 50% female) were polled on their opinions and background characteristics.

The majority of these students were white (86%) and had been raised in predominantly white suburbs. Two-thirds of them reported having at least a B average in high school, and over 50% of the students planned to live on campus.

Twenty-eight percent of the students decided to attend the University of Maryland, College Park, mainly for academic reasons (12% because of its overall academic quality and 16% for the academic quality of a particular department or program), 25% selected UMCP for its geographic location, and 16% because it was relatively inexpensive. UMCP was the the first or second choice of a school for 82% of the sample. Although 79% of the students believed that UMCP has a good academic reputation, 41% also indicated that they considered the University a "party" school.

The incoming freshmen indicated that their most important current educational objective was learning skills directly applicable to their career goals (60%), and another 15% selected "deciding upon a career goal" as their first choice. Related to their educational objectives were their educational philosophies. When asked to rank four different educational philosophies in terms of how accurately they described the student's own philosophy, the most highly ranked choices by the students were: (1) higher education as a training for a career (66% ranked this choice either first or second), (2) the importance of the extra-curricular aspects of college (55% ranked this as their first or second choice), (3) education for the pursuit of knowledge, interest in ideas and cultivation of the intellect (41% made this their first or second choice), and (4) higher education as emphasizing individualistic interests, concern for personal identity (only 7% ranked this choice first and 17% ranked it second, while almost half (49%) of the sample ranked this choice as least descriptive of their own philosophy).

On social issue items, the entering freshmen tend to be non-committal in that 52% were neutral about whether the University should actively recruit blacks and 40% were neutral about whether UMCP should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State.

Each summer the Testing, Research and Data Processing Unit of the Counseling Center administers the University New Student Census (UNSC) to a sample of entering freshmen who attend the two-day Freshman Orientation Program. This report is based on the data obtained from the 1979 administration of the UNSC and is presented as a descriptive profile of the entering freshman class of the Fall semester, 1979, at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). In many instances percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding or "other" responses to some items.

General Description

The 1979 sample consisted of 1183 entering freshmen (50% males and 50% females), and accounted for approximately 22% of the total entering freshman class of 5,325. The mean SAT scores for the total entering freshmen were: SAT-VERBAL 450 and SAT-MATH 510. The sample was 86% white, 9% black, 3% Asian-Oriental, and 2% Hispanic. Sixteen percent of the students attending the orientation program indicated they had some type of physical disability. Of that percentage, 11% reported some loss of sight, 2% had some loss of hearing, and 1% each had difficulty with speech or were legally blind. The sample reported its religious affiliation as follows: 30% Catholic, 23% Protestant, 21% Jewish, 13% none, and 12% other. The respondents indicated their political positions as middle of the road 37%, liberal/left 31%, and conservative/right 18%.

Seventy-two percent of the sample reported they had spent most of their lives in the suburbs, 12% in cities, and 10% in small towns. Only 5% had lived in a rural area before coming to UMCP. Related to the type of area where our freshmen grew up is the racial composition of that area. Twenty-eight percent of the sample grew up in neighborhoods that were made up nearly 100% of their own race, 51% in neighborhoods that were between 75 and 100% their own race,

14% reported coming from an area made up of between 25-75% of their race, and only 6% from neighborhoods of less than 25% of their own race.

When asked what contributed most to their development during the past year, 47% reported that friendships made or social life were the most important, while 21% said job experience, and 14% of the sample chose educational experiences (course work 5%, individual or independent study 5%, and contact with teachers/ counselors 4%). There were some divisional differences in these responses, with a smaller percentage of those respondents who were entering the Division of Arts and Humanities (A & H) choosing job experience and larger percentage selecting friendships made (compared to all other divisions), and respondents entering the General Studies (GS) Division endorsing social life to a greater degree, relative to all other divisions (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Item 18: Which one of the following contributed <u>most</u> to your own development during the past year?

Options	% all freshmen	% males	% females
1. Social life (dating, parties, etc.)	26	24	28
2. Friendships made	21	22	22
3. Job experience	21	21	21
4. Course work	5	5	4
5. Contact with teachers/counselors	4	3	4
6. Individual or independent study/ or research	5	5	5
7. Work with group not involved in social or political action	4	4	3
8. Work with political or social action group	3	3	3

The majority of new freshmen planned to live on campus, either in a residence hall (51%) or fraternity or sorority house (5%), while 29% planned to live at their parents' home, and another 8% intended to share a house or apartment. There were some slight sex differences on this item, with a higher percentage of males (33% vs. 26% females) planning to live at home, and a greater percentage of females (54% vs. 47% males) planning to live in residence halls. Also, a greater percentage of respondents enrolling in General Studies (GS) selected parents' home, and a greater percentage of Allied Health (AH) students said residence hall (compared to all other divisional groups). These percentages were reinforced by the responses to the item: I would prefer to commute rather than live on campus, as 28% agreed with the item, 22% were neutral, and 48% disagreed. Of those who would be living off-campus, 15% said they would be driving 11-50 miles each way, 10% said 6-10 miles each way, 6% said 3-5 miles each way, and 8% said less than 3 miles each way. Another 54% of the respondents selected "I will be living on campus" as their answer to this item. When asked about the method of transportation they planned to use to get to campus, 54% choose either 'will be living on campus (34%) " or "walk (21%)", while another 29% intended to drive, either alone (17%), or in a carpool (12%); 6% said they would be using public transportation (4% chose UM shuttle bus and 2% indicated Metro bus and/or rail), and 3% indicated they would bicycle to campus.

When asked who or what was most influential in their decision to attend UMCP, 44% said relatives, either parents (34%) or other family members (10%), another 13% selected members of the University community (students 8%, alumni 1%, faculty/staff 2%, and admissions officers 2%), while 4% said high school staff and 4% high school students. A full one-third of the sample endorsed "other" for this item, perhaps indicating a lack of appropriate options for the item.

The majority of the respondents (60%) expected to participate in some form of intramural sports, while 19% did not. Predictably, more males (72%) agreed with this item, and more females did not. By division, a slightly greater percentage of Behavioral and Social Sciences (BSS) respondents expected to play intramural sports, while a slightly smaller percentage of Human and Community Resources (HCR) did not. The sample was fairly even in their responses to the item asking if they followed the UMCP athletic teams. Thirty-eight per cent indicated that they closely followed the teams, 28% said they did not, and 34% were unsure. By sex, a greater percentage of males said they followed the teams closely (compared to females), and by division, respondents affiliating with BSS and AH showed a greater percentage of positive endorsements (compared to all other divisions).

More than one-third of the sample (39%) graduated from a high school with a graduating class of between 300 and 500, 25% graduated in a class of 500-700, 17% in a class of 100-300, and 8% in a class of 700-900. Only 5% had a graduating class of more than 900 or less than 100. Seventy-six percent of the sample had graduated from high schools where at least 50% of the students went on to college, whereas only 8% of the incoming freshmen graduated from schools where 30% or fewer went to college. Over two-thirds (67%) of the respondents indicated that their average grade in high school was a B, 17% said they had had an A average, and 16% reported a C average. Females, in general, reported higher average grades than males, while a greater percentage of Agricultural and Life Sciences (ALS) respondents indicated A averages, a greater percentage of Allied Health students reported B averages, and a greater percentage of General Studies students reported C averages, relative to all other divisions.

View of the University of Maryland

The major reasons the 1979 entering class chose to attend UMCP were: Academic (28%) (academic quality of a department or program 16%, overall academic quality of the University 12%), geographic location (25%), and economic (relatively inexpensive 16%). Compared to all other divisions, the General Studies respondents were slightly less inclined to choose UMCP for academic reasons, while Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering students and Behavioral and Social Sciences students were more apt to choose it for academic reasons.

The respondents seemed to be quite uninformed about the number of campuses making up the University of Maryland and the extent of State support for the University. Only 9% of the sample correctly indicated that the University of Maryland has four more campuses in addition to UMCP (79% of the students underestimated the number of campuses and 9% overestimated them). Sixty-four percent of the incoming freshmen believed that the State of Maryland ranks among the top 20 states in support of higher education, and an additional 21% placed it at least above average, while only 1% of the sample selected "among the 10 states least supporting higher education," which is where the State actually ranks. Thirty-seven percent of the sample reported that their primary knowledge about UMCP came from visiting the campus, and another 32% cited University publications. Only 8% reported that they had obtained most of their knowledge from college guides such as Lovejoy's or Barron's, while another 1% each said from newspapers and magazines, or from radio and T.V.

That UMCP was the initial choice of schools for most of the respondents is shown by the fact that 82% reported that UMCP was either their first (60%) or second (22%) choice. Only 2% of the sample reported that UMCP was their last choice. By division, a slightly greater percentage of Agriculture and Life Sciences students endorsed UMCP as either their third choice or their last

choice, and a slightly greater percentage of General Studies respondents identified UMCP as their first choice (compared to all other divisions). Over three quarters (79%) of the respondents believed that UMCP has a good academic reputation, while only 3% disagreed. Divisionally, respondents in Agriculture and Life Sciences were more apt to disagree, while respondents in Human and Community Resources and Arts and Humanities were more apt to agree that UMCP had a good academic reputation (compared to all other divisions).

The majority (55%) of the respondents believed that channels for expressing complaints would be readily available (18% did not). Nearly half of the sample (48%) expected that their class assignments would not be fully explained to them, 27% expected that they would be fully explained, and 25% were not sure. Forty-five percent of the freshmen believed that most instructors would not act as if they cared about students. A significantly greater percentage of females (51%) than males (40%) felt that instructors would not act as if they cared about students; while divisionally, the Agriculture and Life Sciences and Behavioral and Social Sciences groups were somewhat more negative, and Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering and Arts and Humanities students were slightly more positive about this statement (I feel most instructors will act as if they care about students), compared to all other divisions.

Although 79% of the respondents felt that UMCP had a good academic reputation, 41% also indicated that they considered UMCP a "party" school (35% were neutral, and 24% disagreed with this statement). Responses to the item "UMCP is known mostly for its athletic teams" were more evenly divided, with 35% of the sample agreeing, another 35% checking "neutral", and 30% disagreeing with the statement.

Fifty percent of the sample did not expect to find a parking space if they drove on campus, 25% expected to, and another 25% were unsure. A greater per-

centage of males (than females) believed they would be able to find a place to park on campus and a greater percentage of Human and Community Resources respondents (compared to all other groups) disagreed with this expectation.

Educational Abilities, Expectations and Objectives

The majority (60%) of the entering freshmen in this study reported that their most important current educational objective was to learn skills directly applicable to their career goals. Males gave a slightly greater endorsement to this item than did females, as did Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering and Arts and Humanities students (compared to all other divisions).

Table 2 shows the highest academic degrees the sample intended to obtain. Forty-two percent aspired to the bachelor's degree, 31% said the master's degree, 8% each said doctoral or medical degree, and 5% chose the law degree.

Table 2.

Highest Academic Degree Students Intend to Obtain

Degree	% All Students	% Males	% Females
Bachelor's	42	39	45
Master's	31	32	31
Doctoral	8	9	7
Medical	8	9	7
Law	5	7	4

The self-reported weakest academic areas for the respondents were: Study habits (23%), mathematics (21%), writing (17%), science courses (11%), reading (9%), taking exams (7%) and note taking (5%). In general, females reported more

difficulty with math (27% vs. 15% for males) and science courses (15% vs. 8% for males), while males more often considered reading (13% vs. 5% for females) and writing (22% vs. 12% for females) their weakest academic areas. While only 17% of the overall sample felt that writing was their weakest academic skill, 62% agreed with the statement "I would like to improve my writing skills." Other academic skills which the respondents expressed a wish to improve were reading (79%) and spelling (57%). When asked which one of a list of non-academic skills/abilities that they would like most to improve, the students selected speaking before a group (28%), being more socially skilled (19%), being more assertive (18%), and being physically active (10%).

When asked about study habits, 29% reported that they cram half of the time and study systematically half the time, 28% reported a 70%-30% ratio, 21% stated that nearly all their studying is done by cramming, 16% said that approximately 30% of their studying was done by cramming and 70% systematically, and only 5% indicated that nearly all their studying was done systematically and on time.

In terms of study methods, over half (54%) of the group reported that they almost always or usually kept up with assignments, 22% reported that they were sometimes behind in their assignments, and 21% said they were usually or almost always behind in their assignments. Forty-one percent of the total sample reported that they usually did their homework at the same time each day, although a greater percentage of Arts and Humanities respondents (compared to all other divisions) said that it was more unlikely that they would do their homework at at the same time each day. Fifty-five percent of the sample said they usually complete their homework on time, 24% said they usually failed to complete their assignments on time, and another 21% selected the neutral response to this item. Half (50%) of the freshmen reported studying an average of 1 to 5 hours per week

in high school, another 30% indicated they studied between 6 and 12 hours weekly, 11% of the sample stated that they studied from 13 to 21 hours per week, while 21% indicated they had studied more than 22 hours per week and another 6% said they had done no studying in high school. Interestingly, a larger percentage of the students enrolling in the General Studies program reported that they had done no studying in high school (compared to all other divisions), while a larger percentage of students in Allied Health (compared to other divisions) reported they had spent from 13 to 21 hours per week studying. Fifty-five percent of the respondents believed that they knew how to use a library well (28% were unsure). Males (61%) agreed more than females (50%) with this item.

When asked about the possibility of staying in school and completing graduation requirements, one fourth (25%) of the respondents said they were absolutely sure they would obtain a degree. Table 3 shows the perceived possible causes of attrition as indicated by the sample. Twenty percent reported they might leave for a good job, 13% because of college costs, 11% for lack of academic ability or skills, and 9% said they might leave because of disinterest in study. Although only 5% of the total sample checked marriage as a possible reason for leaving school, this item was selected by 9% of the female respondents compared to only 2% of the males. One-third of the entering freshmen (33%) reported that they had seriously thought about not going to college at all, and only 13% agree with the statement "Chances are good that I will at some time drop out temporarily before I complete a bachelor's degree." When asked what would be the most likely reason if they remained at UMCP and graduated, the majority (59%) chose options related to career orientation, 19% selected interest in ideas and the pursuit of knowledge,

and 5% said they would stay because parents or relatives expected them to do so. (See Table 4)

Table 3.

Responses to the Item: Nationally, about 50% of University students typically leave before receiving a degree. If this should happen to you, which of the following do you think would be the most likely reason?

Most likely reason	% Responses
Absolutely certain I will obtain a degree	25
To accept a good job	20
It would cost more than my family or I could afford	13
Lack of scholastic ability/insufficient reading or other academic skills	11
Disinterest in study	9
Marriage	5

The majority of the sample (58%) expected that their courses would be stimulating and exciting (29% were unsure), and 45% of the respondents believed that course content was more important than getting a good grade (34% were unsure).

Table 4.

Responses to the Item: If you remain at the University and complete graduation requirements, which do you think will be the most likely reason?

Most likely reason	% Responses
A college degree is the only way I can enter my chosen profession	29
I am interested in ideas and the pursuit of knowledge	19
College graduates get better jobs	14
I must have a degree in order to enter graduate or professional school	13
Parents or relatives expect me to	5
The opportunity to meet and know many different people	4
College graduates earn more money	3
To gain experience from extra-curricular activities	3

View of Career and Major

The reasons chosen by the respondents as most important for long term career choices were intrinsic interest in the field (17%), work with people (15%), high anticipated earnings (14%), job openings usually available (11%), rapid career advancement possible (9%), well respected/prestigious occupation (9%), great deal of independence (5%), and work with ideas (4%). Table 5 shows the relatively higher percentage endorsements by division for the above choices. Agriculture and Life Sciences respondents were most likely to choose intrinsic interest and prestige, while Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering students tended to choose jobs available and work with ideas. Behavioral and Social Sciences students more often chose high earnings and advancement, Arts and Humanities students chose prestige and work with ideas most often, while Human and Community Resources and Allied Health students chose work with people and General Studies students more often chose independence.

Families and relatives constituted the main source of career knowledge for the respondents (28%), with the father accounting for 16% of that amount. Twenty-two percent of the sample checked written materials as their main source of career knowledge, and 16% indicated that high school teachers and counselors were their prime sources. The most influential role models, in terms of career choices, were the fathers (25%), mothers (13%), friends (10%) and teachers (7%). A greater percentage of the females chose mothers and a greater percentage of the males chose fathers as influential role models.

The demands for more freedom of choice in terms of courses and academic requirements that were so prevalent in the late 60's and early 70's seem to have reversed, with nearly one-half (49%) of the sample reporting that they would rather pick an established major than create their own (36% were

unsure). Arts and Humanities respondents were more interested in creating their own majors and Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering students and Allied Health affiliates indicated the opposite.

Table 5.

Responses by Division to item: Which one of the following is most important to you in your long-term career choice?*

Variable	Division
Intrinsic interest in the field	Agriculture and Life Sciences
Work with people	Human and Community Resources; Allied Health
High anticipated earninings	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Job openings usually available	Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering
Rapid career advancement possible	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Well respected, prestigious occupation	Agriculture and Life Sciences; Arts and Humanities
Great deal of independence	General Studies
Work with ideas	Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering; Arts and Humanities

* Endorsement by divisions of variables compares all divisions with each other.

The majority of freshmen (56%) indicated they would be interested in educational/vocational counseling, and 27% expressed an interest in counseling for personal/social concerns. Arts and Humanities and Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering students indicated a greater interest in educational/voctional counseling compared to all other groups.

The survey respondents were asked to list three occupations that were their current vocational goals. Those occupations were then coded, using Holland's typology (Holland, 1979). Based on their reported current vocational goals, the entering freshmen are primarily interested in occupations that can be coded as I , E , A , or S (Investigative, Enterprising, Artistic or Social). There were differences by sex: more males endorsed I (17%) and E (14) and females chose S (17%) and A (13%). (See Table 6 for a definition of Holland's codes). Choices by Division are presented in Table 6. As can be seen, each divisional affiliation is different and intuitively appropriate for that division. The "hard science " divisions (Agriculture and Life Sciences and Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering) are primarily Investigative, Allied Health and Human and Community Resources are primarily Social, Arts and Humanities and General Studies are primarily Artistic, and Behavioral and Social Sciences are primarily Enterprising.

Employment and Finances

Only 17% of the respondents reported that staying in school was dependent upon a part-time job. One-quarter of this group indicated they would need to earn more than $75 per week, half of them said they would need to earn between $40 and $75 per week, and one-quarter would need from $20 to $40 per week in order to remain in school. Although only a relatively small percentage of the sample said they needed to work to stay in school, 50% planned to work during the school year. The largest number (31%) of respondents planned to work off-campus, 14% said they would work on-campus (4% in federally funded work study programs and 10% in other on-campus work), 2% said they would be working for academic credit, and 11% checked some "other" type of work. During the past year, the majority (92%) of the sample worked and earned varying amounts of money, ranging from under $100 to over $3,000. More than

Table 6.

Definitions of Holland's Occupational Codes and

Choices by Division

Occupational Codes	1st Choice by Division
Realistic - likes realistic jobs such as automobile mechanic, aircraft controller, surveyor, farmer, electrician. Has mechanical abilities but may lack social skills.	None
Investigative - likes investigative jobs such as biologist, chemist, physicist, anthropologist, geologist, medical technologist. Has mathematical and scientific ability but often lacks leadership ability.	Agriculture and Life Sciences Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Engineering
Artistic - likes artistic jobs such as composer, musician, stage director, writer, interior decorator, actor/actress. Artistic abilities: writing, musical or artistic, but often lacks clerical skills.	Arts and Humanities
Social- likes social jobs such as teacher, religious worker, counselor, clinical psychologist, psychiatric case worker, speech therapist. Has social skills and talents, but often lacks mechanical and scientific ability.	Human and Community Resources Arts and Humanities
Enterprising - likes enterprising jobs such as salesperson, manager, business executive, television producer, sports promoter, buyer. Has leadership and speaking abilities but often lacks scientific ability.	Behavioral and Social Sciences
Conventional - likes conventional jobs such as bookkeeper, stenographer, financial analyst, banker, cost estimator, tax expert. Has clerical and arithmetic ability, but often lacks artistic abilities.	None

one-third (37%) of the students earned between $1,000 and $3,000 (42% of the males were in this category vs. 32% of the females); another 26% earned between $500 and $1,000 ; 20% earned up to $500 (14% males vs. 25% females); and 8% over $3,000 (11% males vs. 6% females). On the questions of whether financial aid should be given more often based on merit rather than on need, the sample was evenly divided, with one-third agreeing, one-third disagreeing, and one-third choosing the neutral response.

Social Concerns

Responses to two social issue items were quite non-committal. When asked if UMCP should actively recruit blacks, 52% were neutral, 20% agreed and 26% disagreed. When asked if the University should use its influence to improve social conditions in the State, 47% agreed, 40% were neutral and 11% disagreed with the item.

Philosophy of Education

The respondents were asked to rank order four different philosophies of education: 1. Higher education as training for a career, 2. Higher education for the pursuit of knowledge, 3. Importance of extra-curricular aspects of college, and 4. Higher education as emphasizing individualistic interests. Forty-one percent of the sample ranked Philosophy # 1 as most descriptive, 25% ranked it second, and 18% ranked it third. Philosphy # 2 was ranked most descriptive by 18% of the sample, 23% ranked it second, and 29% ranked it third. Twenty-eight percent of the sample ranked philosophy # 3 as most descriptive of their own educational philosophy, 27% ranked it second and 21% third. Only 7% of the respondents ranked philosophy # 4 as most descriptive, 17% ranked it second, 23% listed it as third, and almost half (46%) of the respondents ranked this choice as least descriptive.

In general, the majority of the students sampled believe that, philosophically, higher education should provide preparation-for careers and practical work experience.

Reference

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